

## **Delta Operations for Salmonids and Sturgeon (DOSS) Group**

9/21/10 Conference call; 9:00 a.m.

**Objective:** Provide advice to the Water Operations Management Team (WOMT) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on measures to reduce adverse effects from Delta operations of the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project on salmonids and green sturgeon.

DOSS will coordinate the work of other technical teams. DOSS notes and advice can be found at: <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocap/actions.htm>

### **Attendees:**

DWR: Mike Ford, Andy Chu; Angela Llaban

USFWS: Nick Hindman

NMFS: Bruce Oppenheim, Barbara Byrne; Barbara Rocco, Jeff Stuart

SWRCB: Kari Kyler, Greg Wilson

DFG: Dan Kratville; Joe Johnson

EPA: Bruce Herbold

### **Agenda:**

- 1) Current fishery data
- 2) Current water project operations
- 3) DCC gate closure in October proposal

### **Fish Monitoring:**

*Mill and Deer Creeks:* Most likely, monitoring will begin in mid- to late October.

*Knights Landing:* We will begin setting traps on October 4; crews will check traps beginning on October 7.

**Delta Monitoring**— Jonathan Speegle, USFWS, sent Delta monitoring data but it was not provided for this meeting.

**Salvage Data:** There was no salvage data after 9/15/10 from the DFG website database to report for this week.

### **Monitoring:** *FWS Sampling Data:*

Beach Seines (includes Liberty Island) 9/12–9/18): Two splittails

One splittail was netted from Reels Beach on 9/14/10; water temperature was 18.5°C; EC was 123.3 S/m

One splittail was netted from Sandy Beach on 9/17/10; water temperature was 19.0°C; EC was 160.0 S/m

Sacramento Midwater Trawls (9/12–9/18): No species of concern were netted

Chipps Island Midwater Trawls (9/12–9/18): One longfin smelt

One longfin smelt was netted on 9/13/10; water temperature was 19.8°C

Mossdale Kodiak Trawls (9/12–9/18): No species of concern were netted

Stanislaus Weir: (9/12–9/18): No species of concern were netted

Sherwood Harbor: One splittail

One splittail was netted on 9/13/10; water temperature was 18.8°C.

**Operations:** DFG website showed no data beyond 9/15/10. There was a question whether DOSS would receive weekly .pdf files of the data, or would be expected to refer to the DFG website from now on.

CVP:

American: Released 1,500 cfs

Goodwin: 300 cfs

SWP:

Oroville: 5,500 cfs released today; we will continue through mid-October to reach minimum flow requirement of 2,500 cfs in DFG Agreement.

Banks: 5,000 cfs in Clifton court today

San Luis R: 354 TAF SWP storage

Freeport came in at 17,500 cfs

San Joaquin R at Vernalis: 2,000 cfs increasing. Pulse flows being released on Merced River.

Operators continue to watch Delta salinity; if it continues to be stagnant for another week, they will need to see how to turn this around. This is including the Merced water. There is already a water quality problem even with pulse flow in the system. Flows are decreasing due to accretion. Flows will increase on the Stanislaus River. USBR was going to release water; we don't support their decision to release that water. They said they won't release it yet but would like to meet with us to discuss it further and decide ways to release that would not be detrimental to water quality or fish.

Red Bluff Diversion Dam Gates:

DOSS began looking at Red Bluff fish monitoring data at beginning of year and compared the data to previous years. The current estimate for juvenile winter-run salmon passage is about ¼ of brood run – lowest since 2003. Juvenile spring-run Chinook passage were higher this past year. Winter-run adult carcass surveys counted 907, the lowest in 10 years for adults. Preliminary winter-run population is ~1,500. The run is declining even though there has been no ocean harvest of winter-run this year. Also, another year of negative Cohort Replacement Rate (<1.0) this year compared to last 4 years.

Stanislaus R: we counted 45 fall-run Chinook adult spawners; highest in last 7-8 years for this time of year; this is a little early to have that many fall-run adults in that part of the river.

**Delta Cross Channel (DCC) Gates Closure**

Joe Johnson from DFG is the person working with EBMUD on the DCC closure. The DCC closure discussion was continued from the DOSS conference call discussion of 9/21/10.

DWR is performing modeling to determine the effects on water quality from closure of the Delta Cross Channel gates, which is required to protect winter-run migrating salmon. EBMUD has indicated that it has 58,000 af of water saved that could be used for the pulse flows the first week of October if necessary to upgrade water quality. This additional water was not included in the modeling data. Last year, this pulse was successful in attracting more adult salmon up the

Mokelumne R to spawn and reduced straying into the American R. We know that about 62% of the Mokelumne R fish are heading up the American River and taking a wrong turn whether going through the gates or not. The potential impact of the exports, the longer the gates are closed, will have to play into the modeling. It appears that the water quality has already been affected. DWR looked at 1,000 cfs last week and another 1,000 cfs today. We cannot afford any further degradation in water quality. There is already salt trapped in some Delta areas. DWR will monitor again this weekend. At this point, because water quality is not in good shape, we are very hesitant to do anything in terms of gate closures.

The Mokelumne River is anticipating increasing outflow to 3,000 cfs in 2 weeks, which may have an effect on water quality. All of this water is going down Middle River toward Clifton Court. Even with the Mokelumne R pulse flow at that level, volume comes to 37,000 af of water in the system, which will still have an impact before the Merced water comes in. We don't know whether there would be a difference if the volume is increased to 57 or 58,000 af, because previous data indicate that there is an impact toward end of October and into November. The impact will not show up right away; it depends on tide on salts coming in.

We know where the fish are right now and are trying to get them past the gate to do small pulse flows after that. We could recommend continuing with plans to close the gate on October 4 and see how many days we can continue without a water quality issue. In general, the longer it is closed, the more water quality issues there will be. We may not see an effect right away but may see it later on and must react to it. Each time we close a gate, it gets backed up until the first flood flushes it out.

The tidal cycle is 2 weeks and that's when there is an influx of salts from the ocean. If there's no way to flush it out, it will continue and will push further in. The difference between the model and the actual data is close to about 300-400  $\mu\text{cm}$ . DWR target is 1,000  $\mu\text{cm}$  and the model is already showing 800-900  $\mu\text{cm}$ ; the actual is already 1,100  $\mu\text{cm}$ . The DOSS group considered making a recommendation on the DCC closure to the WOMT group for discussion at its upcoming meeting today.

### **Recommendation:**

DOSS discussed the DCC closure proposed by EBMUD, including some alternatives that were suggested to address the water quality concerns expected by USBR and DWR based on current conditions and the modeling done to date. One option considered was to close the DCC for just 5 days instead of the originally proposed 10 days; however, given that exports have already been reduced by approximately 2000 cfs over the past week because of water quality concerns, DWR and USBR expected that a closure of even 5 days would still most likely degrade water quality such that additional export curtailments would be required. Another option discussed was the possibility for a relaxation of the D-1641 chloride standard so that the DCC closure could go forward without an associated reduction in exports. It was generally agreed that the relaxation of a municipal water quality standard to avoid export curtailments that would otherwise be associated with implementation of a fish study was not likely to be approved by the SWRCB perhaps at all, and certainly not by early October.

DOSS advises that WOMT make a decision on the DCC closure at next week's meeting on 9/28, after considering real-time conditions and any additional modeling on water quality conditions. DOSS would advise that WOMT consider the issue and a new modeling run be presented for WOMT next week for a final decision. DWR is watching a very tight situation; model is

indication and even with all the water in, the DCC closure will affect water quality. WOMT will most likely want to make a final decision on this.

### **Head of Old River Barrier:**

DFG determines whether a temporary rock barrier goes in in the fall depending on dissolved oxygen (DO) in the Port of Stockton. No update yet. DO was above the threshold.

### **New Business**

Oppenheim announced that he will be stepping down as DOSS lead to supervise another branch through October. Barbara Byrne will take over, suggested that we skip next week and begin again on October 5. There is so little fish monitoring data; nothing much going on, so it would be okay to postpone for another week.

The CALFED conference is next Monday–Wednesday so that's another good reason to not have conference call next week, but will make data available.

CALFED- OPS meeting tomorrow: someone needs to give the DOSS update. EBMUD might show up at the CALFED Ops mtg and may be able to give background of Mokelumne R pulse flow study and report on water quality. Andy, Thuy, and Barb will be there to present operations.

**Next meeting:** 10/5/10 at 9:00 am.